

Writing strategies, ideas and activities to  
enrich and improve pupils' writing skills.

# Improving and Enriching the Writing

English Language Workshop

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# Improving Writing

## Writing and Representing Skills and Strategies:

- Generation and selection of ideas for writing and representing
- Development and organisation of ideas in writing and representing
- Review, revision and editing of writing and representation

To improve the quality of pupil writing:

- Explicitly and systematically teach the structure and language demands of the writing task
- Focus on audience and purpose
- Explicitly teach the thinking processes involved in writing
- Immerse pupils in examples of the required style of writing
- Model and jointly construct texts
- Use guided and independent practice
- Employ peer and self-assessment and critical reflection
- Write with your pupils!

## Activity 1

- Fast write about a special place or person
- Share the writing and discuss how you support pupils to improve their writing.

## Focus on Writing

- **Spotlighting:**
  - Word and sentence level
  - Lexical density
- **Structure:**
  - Purpose and audience
  - Form
  - Syntax and paragraphing
  - Framing devices
- **Senses:**
  - Sound: Euphony, discordance...the vowels and consonants
  - Sight: Figurative devices
  - Feeling: Nuances

## Activities

### Sentence building

Simple sentences that are enriched by adding more layers.

E.g.

1. Begin with an article, subject and a verb. *The rain fell.*
2. Add an adjective and an adverb. *The heavy rain fell incessantly.*

1. Add prepositional phrases. *In the middle of the day, the heavy rain fell incessantly onto the steaming streets.*
2. Add an appositive phrase. *In the middle of the day, the heavy rain, seemingly angry with the people rushing to shelter, fell incessantly onto the steaming streets.*
3. Add a subordinate clause. *In the middle of the day, the heavy rain, seemingly angry with the people rushing to shelter, fell incessantly onto the steaming streets, as the sun rays peaked through the clouds.*
4. Add a triad of absolute phrases. *In the middle of the day, the heavy rain, seemingly angry with the people rushing to shelter, fell incessantly onto the steaming streets, as the sun's rays peaked through the clouds, sparkling in the puddles, dancing on the drenched footpaths, disappearing behind heavy clouds.*

### Sentence imitation

Match the shape and word order of original sentences. Select sentences from well written stories and novels and get the pupils to imitate the structure.

### Skeleton stories

Provide the outline of a story and ask the pupils to add specific ingredients, such as:

- Simile
- Alliteration to one sentence
- Improve three of the verbs
- Add two adjectives to two sentences
- Add a triad of absolute phrases in one sentence.

### Image palette

Provide a list of prepositional phrases and subordinate clauses and ask the pupils to select at least six to create an original description. E.g.

Prepositional Phrases	Subordinate Clauses
<i>during the night</i>	<i>because the waves were frightening</i>
<i>on an empty beach</i>	<i>as he walked towards the shoreline</i>
<i>behind the sandhills</i>	<i>when the sun set</i>
<i>like a lost gull</i>	<i>although he had been warned</i>
<i>out of breath</i>	<i>Unless he could reach the shore</i>

### Masterchef Narratives

The teacher provides the ingredients and the pupils have 15 minutes to 'cook' the special narrative.

### Recipe

A teddy bear  
A red ribbon  
A faded photograph  
Two adjectives only  
Present tense

First person  
A simile  
Alliteration  
Onomatopoeia  
A fractured sentence  
Ellipsis  
150 words maximum

### Phrase writing activities

Pupils to describe family, self or friends using prepositional and appositive phrases.

Phrases	Friend or Family Member
Prepositional phrase example	My grandson imagines that he is Buzz Lightyear <i>with magical powers</i> .
Prepositional phrase	
Prepositional phrase	
Prepositional phrase	
Prepositional phrase	
Appositive phrase example	My grandson, <i>an active four year old with blonde curls</i> , makes me smile.
Appositive phrase	
Appositive phrase	
Appositive phrase	
Appositive phrase	

### Flash Fiction

50 words narratives based on a range of topic. To make this more challenging, take away the letter 'e'.

### Varying the Structure and Form of a Narrative

- **Flashback:** Start at the end and show what has led to this moment. Get the pupils to begin a narrative with the conclusion and write backwards.
- **Multiple Perspectives:** A story told through two or more characters. Get the pupils to write in pairs writing as the same character but with an altered perspective, such as a hero transformed into a villain.
- **Multiple Narratives:** Different stories connected by a theme or a motif, such as: survival. The pupils could work in groups of three. Each pupil could write in a different time period but their stories are connected by the theme of survival.
- **Pastiche:** Include a range of text forms such as: a narrative, newspaper clippings, a text message or MySpace posting. Scavenger Hunt on the net: Pupils have 10 minutes to find on the internet unrelated items such as: a headline, an image, a blog posting and an advertisement.

- **Circular Structure:** A story starts at a specific moment in a story; flashes back to explain the lead-up to this moment, and then finally returns to the original specific moment. Pupils are given a scene such as: Watching a game show on television or swimming at the beach. They have to begin and end in this same place.

## Effective Writing Resources

- **Children's Creative Story Writing:**  
<http://www.midlandit.co.uk/education/storyhistory.htm>
- **Short Story Writing Tips:** <http://www.shortstorygroup.com/storytips.htm>
- **Tips for Writing a Short Story:** <http://www.write101.com/shortstory.htm>.
- **Writing Tips for Young People:**  
<http://www.actwriters.org.au/youth/Writing%20Tips.htm>
- Kate Grenville. (1990). *The Writing Book*. Allen and Unwin
- John Marsden. (1993). *Everything I Know About Writing*, Reed Books Australia
- **50 tools for a web-based story:** <http://cogdogroo.wikispaces.com/StoryTools>
- **Box of Tricks:** [http://www.boxoftricks.net/?page\\_id=29](http://www.boxoftricks.net/?page_id=29) and **Cool Tools for Schools,** <http://cooltoolsforschools.wikispaces.com/>: Links to a range of sites for planning, researching and composing writing.
- **Grammar Skills:** <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/grammar/>
- **Grammar Monster:** <http://www.grammar-monster.com/index.html>
- **Visuword:** <http://www.visuwords.com/> - a beautiful online thesaurus to find more effective synonyms.

# *To see the world in a grain of sand...*

## *Formative Task 1:*

For the next few weeks we will be celebrating the literature that demands your attention – that is intoxicating, elegiac, haunting... Your task is to find such pieces. You could trawl through the shelves at home or at school or internet or ask the people around you for that one poem, song or extract from a novel or play that continues to vibrate in the memory. When you have found them, you have to distill it like fine wine into a five minute podcast or vodcast where you try to capture what is special about these gems.

## *Formative Task 2: Found Poem*

For this week, individually or in pairs hunt down one line from twenty texts and create an original found poem! You could steal a line from Marvell, Coleridge, Blake... or even take a line from twenty of Shakespeare's plays or sonnets! The possibilities are endless!



*Life, like a dome of many-colored  
glass,  
Stains the white radiance of  
eternity.  
--- Percy Bysshe Shelley  
"Adonais"*

## *Formative Task 3: Musings of a Future Artist*

Now it is your turn to create your work of art! You can write or produce a text that will be your *raison d'être* in any medium!

### *Some suggestions*



**Poetry:** Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Andrew Marvell, John Donne, Robert Gray, Seamus Heaney, Sylvia Plath, Philip Larkin, William Wordsworth, TS Eliot, Pablo

Neruda, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Dylan Thomas...

**Novels:** A.S. Byatt, Alex Miller, Murakami, Neil Gaiman, Gao Xingjian, Ian McEwan, Orhan Pamuk, Cormac McCarthy, Margaret Atwood, Tim Winton...

**Plays:** Shakespeare, Oscar Wilde, Beckett, Stoppard...

### **Some Sites:**

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/series/greatpoets>

<http://web.mac.com/b1b2/blah/greatlivingnovels.html>

<http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,1951793,00.html>

## Writing and Representation inspired by Fairy Tales



### Background Information:

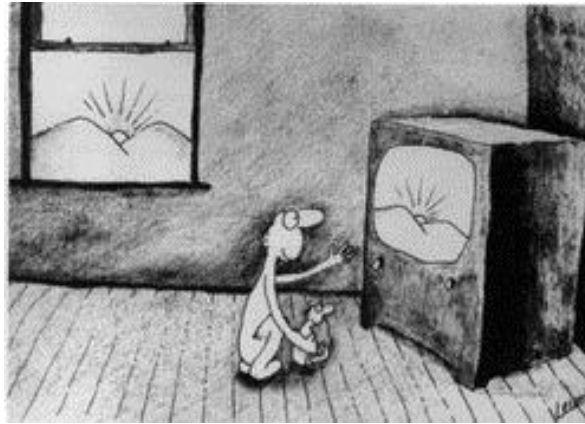
There have been many art works that have been based on famous fairy tales, such as the two Dina Goldstein's paintings featured that are based on Snow White and Sleeping Beauty.

### The Task:

Your task is to create an original representation on an A4 sheet and an accompanying narrative or poem that is inspired by a fairy tale, such as Rapunzel or Red Riding Hood. You can transport the fairy tale character to the present and imagine what their life would be like today or change the ending of the fairy tale, such as having the wicked stepmother in Snow White triumph.

Marking Criteria	Writing	Representation
Interpretation of the task	/5	/5
Creativity	/10	/10
The interconnectedness of the writing and the representation	/5	/5
The message conveyed by the representation and the writing	/10	
Total	/50	

## Persuasive Writing: Technology vs. Life



With a touch of a button we can be transported to amazing worlds, connect with people across the globe and access more information than humanity ever thought possible. We can twitter, skype, google, surf and blog but are we forgetting to make meaningful connections with nature and people?

Your grandparents raced home from school and probably played a game of cricket in the backyard, climbed trees and road their bikes through the neighbourhood. They wrote letters to family and friends, and had dinner at the dining room table with their parents. Is this still the world today? Do any of you race home and switch the computer on to check your Facebook page, maybe play a few online games and then eat dinner in front of the television?

The Government is concerned about your generation and future generations that are disconnecting from the natural world and each other. They have been debating whether they need to impose a number of mandatory restrictions on the use of technology. A National Commission has proposed the following actions:

- limiting the number of hours that young people at home can be online to two hours a day;
- stopping all television broadcasts between the hours of 4:00pm and 7:00pm; and,
- raising the age that people can play computer games to 18.

The National Commission has invited representatives of the youth of today to present their responses in writing. Your team has been selected to represent the young people of your school. Your team has to write a persuasive case for or against the proposed action. You have to capture their attention and present a convincing case in just **200 words!**

Your persuasive writing could be accompanied by one of the following:

- A power point or prezi with images and sound
- Catchy slogans or raps

Remember to be **persuasive** and **passionate!**



# The Great Imagery Competition

## Auguries of Innocence

### William Blake

To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour.

A robin redbreast in a cage  
Puts all heaven in a rage.

A dove-house fill'd with doves and pigeons  
Shudders hell thro' all its regions.  
A dog starv'd at his master's gate  
Predicts the ruin of the state.

A horse misused upon the road  
Calls to heaven for human blood.  
Each outcry of the hunted hare  
A fibre from the brain does tear.

A skylark wounded in the wing,  
A cherubim does cease to sing.  
The game-cock clipt and arm'd for fight  
Does the rising sun affright.

Every wolf's and lion's howl  
Raises from hell a human soul.



### Activity

1. State in one paragraph what Blake is saying in this poem. (5 marks)
2. Identify **five** key language features. (5 marks)

## **Haikus (15 marks)**

Create one haiku for each image:

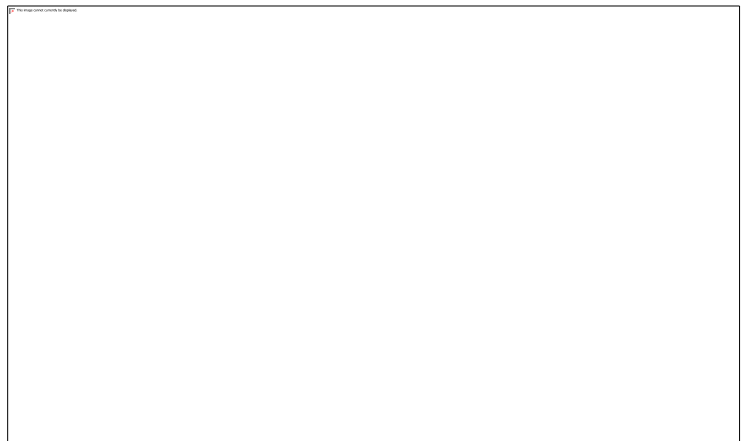
### **Haiku 1**



### **Haiku 2**



### **Haiku 3**



## Figurative Devices

Poem = 10 marks

Devices = 5 marks



Using the above image, create an original poem that contains at least **five** of the following:

Simile  
Metaphor  
Zoomorphism  
Sibilants  
Enjambment  
Alliteration  
Onomatopoeia  
Assonance  
Consonance  
Apostrophe  
Synaesthesia  
Pathetic Fallacy  
Apostrophe  
Oxymoron  
Synecdoche

## Activity 2: Sharing Ideas and Strategies

In groups, share your approaches to improving the writing. Create a list of at least ten approaches.

[illegible]

# Narrative Planning Mat

## Orientation

- Good openings catch the reader's interest
- Show not tell
- Tense and person

## Characterisation

- Voice
- Motives and role
- Appearance: the eyes, movements, dress,
- Relationships
- Actions
- Striking adjectives and verbs
- Dialogue: authentic

## Setting

- Orient the reader through setting
- Time, place, weather, colours
- The senses: look, feel, sound like
- Pathetic fallacy: nature

## Structure

- Orientation
- Complication
- Resolution
- Coda
- Motif
- Tension
- Variation: circular, flashback, multiple perspectives, stream of consciousness

## Style - Sentences

- Vary sentence starters
- Variety of sentence types and lengths: simple, compound, complex, declarative, exclamatory, truncated, etc.

## Style – Word Choice

- Person: First, second or third
- Striking verbs
- Colourful adjectives
- Use precise nouns
- Nominalisation
- Sounds: Consonants and vowels – fricative, discordant, etc.
- Imagery: figurative devices, sound devices, symbolism

## Ideas

- Paired metaphors
- Current headlines
- Your core values: Integrity, honesty, compassion, empathy

## Incidents

- Start in the middle of the action
- Write from experience
- Show don't tell!
- Leave something for the reader's imagination

### **Activity 3: Writing Lessons: Design in a group two innovative lessons to improve writing**

<b>Text Form:</b>
<b>Outcomes:</b>
<b>Essential learning goal:</b>
<b>Significance of the lesson:</b>
<b>Key learning ideas:</b>
<b>Overview of Writing Strategies</b>

## **Lesson 2**

<b>Text Form:</b>
<b>Outcomes:</b>
<b>Essential learning goal:</b>
<b>Significance of the lesson:</b>
<b>Key learning ideas:</b>
<b>Overview of Writing Strategies</b>